

Message Text

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FM USINT HAVANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2619

S E C R E T HAVANA 2128

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EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: ASEC CU

SUBJ: SECURITY GUARD DETENTION

REF: HAVANA 2086; B) STATE 172478; C. HAVANA 1903

1. USINT RECEIVED MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS
(MINREX) NOTE NUMBER 302 DATED JULY 19 CONCERNING DETENTION OF
MARINE SECURITY GUARD KURTIS LEON JOHNSON. FULL TEXT OF NOTE WIL
BE POUCHED TO ARA/CCA-WAYNE SMITH. NOTE, WHICH RESPONDS TO
OUR PROTEST ON MATTER (REF B), MAKES FOLLOWING ASSERTIONS:

--JOHNSON TOOK PHOTOGRAPHS "IN VICINITY" (EN LAS INMEDIACIONES)
OF A MILITARY UNIT NEAR BOCA DE JARUCO.

--CUBAN AUTHORITIES HANDLED JOHNSON CASE WITH "COMPLE DISCRE-
TION", COMMUNICATED AITH ACTING USINT CHIEF "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE",
AND HANDED OVER JOHNSON "MINUTES AFTER" ACTING USINT CHIEF WAS
ALLOWED TO SEE HIM.

--IN REPLY TO SEPTEMBER 1977 USINT QUERY ON PHOTOGRAPHY, MINREX
NORTH AMERICAN DIRECTOR GARCIA PERAZA TOLD USINT CHIEF,
OCTOBER 6, 1977, THAT USINT FUNCTIONARIES COULD TAKE WHATEVER
PHOTOGRAPHS THEY WISHED, WITH ONLY PROHIBITION BEING MILITARY
OBJECTS AND INSTALLATIONS. GARCIA PERAZA ADDED, HOWEVER,

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THAT "SENSITIVITY OF CUBAN POPULATION AS CONSEQUENCE OF DECADES
OF AGGRESSION AND HOSTILITY" SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.
"ENERGETIC REACTION" OF POPULACE TO THINGS THAT "COULD BE
CONSIDERED AS CAUSING HARM TO THEM" WAS ALSO POINTED UP.

--IN ORDER TO AVOID REPETITION OF JOHNSON INCIDENT, USINT
PERSONNEL SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ELEMENTS OF OCTOBER 6 COMMU-

NICATION TO USINT CHIEF.

-- MINREX HAS RETURNED JOHNSON'S CAMERA, LENS, AND BICYCLE
(REF A).

2. BEGIN COMMENT: MINREX NOTE FALLS SHORT OF ADMITTING THAT
JOHNSON DETENTION WAS UNWARRANTED, BUT, ON OTHER HAND, DOES
NOT MAINTAIN CHARGE THAT LATTER ACTUALLY TOOK PHOTOGRAPH OF
MILITARY UNIT. IN ADDITION, REFERENCE TO "ENERGETIC REACTION"
OF AROUSED PUBLIC IS IMPLICIT ADMISSION OF OVERZEALOUSNESS ON
PART OF BORDER GUARD DETAINING PERSONNEL (OR COVER STORY TO
THAT EFFECT). AS EXPECTED, CUBANS PUT BEST FACE ON THEIR
SIX-HOUR DETENTION OF JOHNSON AND DID NOT OFFER GUARANTEE
AGAINST REPETITION OF INCIDENT. WE, HOWEVER, HAVE REGISTERED
OUR VIEWS CLEARLY ON THIS MATTER FOR THE RECORD.

3. USINT SEES NO UTILITY IN PURSUING MATTER FURTHER AND
CONSIDERS CASE CLOSED. END COMMENT.
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